

PAUL KEHOE TD

Minister of State with Responsibility for Defence



Wexford Agriculture Update

Budget 2017

Once again owing to Fine Gael's presence in Government, supports to farmers and particular measures which reflect our determination to help rural communities, were to the fore on Budget Day. 2016 has been a very challenging year for farmers and with nearly 6,000 people working at farm level in the County, measures designed to boost farm incomes will come as welcome relief.



Roundtable Discussion with Wexford IFA members

Understanding the risks that farmers take on in operating their own business, Budget 2017 includes increased supports for the self-employed, which will be hugely beneficial for farmers in the County whose incomes have been under pressure.

- Increase in the 'Earned Income Credit' by €400 to €950
- Reduction in the lower three USC rates by one half of a percentage point meaning
 - 1% reduced to 0.5%
 - 3% reduced to 2.5%
 - 5.5% reduced to 5%
- Increased PRSI benefits including cover for Invalidity Pension from December 2017 and access to Treatment Benefit Scheme which provides partial dental, optical and aural services to qualified people, from March 2017. Treatment Benefit entitlements will be extended further from October 2017 for the self-employed and employees, providing additional dental and optical benefits.

Get involved!

Getting involved in politics at a local level can be a very enjoyable experience! There are lots of different ways to participate and make a difference. I am always very grateful for any help people are willing to give. If you'd like to play a part in public affairs in our area please email: info@GetOnBoard.ie

Key Budget Highlights

€150 million
low interest cash flow support loan – with an interest rate of 2.95% for livestock and tillage sectors.

NEW €25 million
sheep welfare scheme.

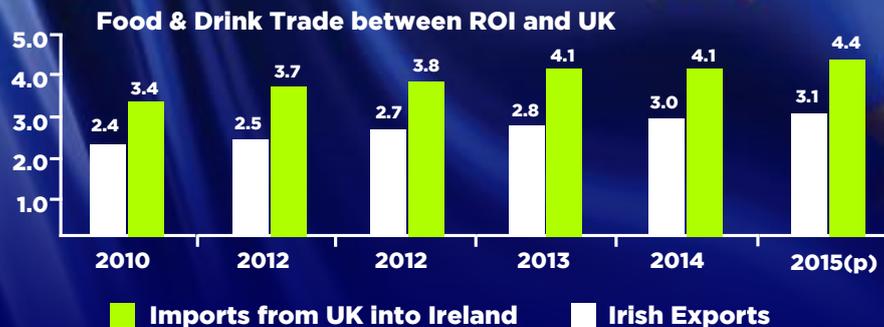
€5 weekly
increase in Farm Assist and Fish Assist with more favourable eligibility criteria.

500 additional
places on the Rural Support Scheme.

€400 increase
in the Earned Income Tax Credit for self-employed.

21% increase
in funding for the Rural Development Programme allowing for an additional 12,000 participants in GLAS, and funding for Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC), Beef Data and Genomics Programme and TAMS.

Wexford Agriculture Update



BREXIT

There is no doubting that the UK's decision to leave the European Union presents many challenges for Irish agri-food exporters. Annually, we export agricultural products worth €5.1 billion to the UK, including more than €1.1 billion in beef products and €970 million in dairy exports. In Wexford more than 2,600 people work in the food and drinks processing sector, highlighting the local need to protect our important trading relationship with the UK.

There is also of course an important North South dimension to this trading relationship with

nearly €750 million worth of Irish agri-food products sold in the North annually.

The success of this trading relationship has been built upon harmonised rules and without the interference of complex certification, quota limits or customs duties and tariffs.

In order to limit the impact upon Irish producers, a Brexit unit has been established within the Department of Agriculture and a new Consultative Committee has been established allowing stakeholders, including Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland to work

closely in identifying issues of importance and agreeing a way to address them.

A number of high profile trade missions are being undertaken by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine seeking out new markets for Irish goods.

As the value of sterling continues to fall, we have already seen the devastating impact upon some mushroom producers. Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland are working with SMEs providing advice and guidance, which can be found on www.bordbia.ie and www.enterprise-ireland.com.

FORESTRY

Windblow Reconstitution Scheme

A scheme has been opened to provide financial aid to private forest owners whose plantations were damaged during severe storms which swept across the country from 3th December 2013 and 12th February 2014. The frequency and ferocity of these storms, the most severe being Storm Desmond, affected 8,000 acres, including areas in the South East. The Scheme will be of great assistance to those who suffered as a consequence of losing timber and having to re-establish affected sites. A maximum grant of €1,700 per hectare up to a total of 10 hectares will be available for those meeting the eligibility criteria. The closing date for receipt of applications will be 24th February 2017. Further details are available through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/grants-and-premium-schemes-2015-2016/>



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TILLAGE ROUNDTABLE

The tillage sector is an important component of the agrifood industry particularly in the South East, Wexford County alone has nearly 48,000 ha under tillage, providing high quality, traceable feedstuff for the livestock sector, as well as quality grains for the rapidly growing brewing and distilling industry. Despite this the sector remains under pressure owing to a combination of low prices, low yield and a difficult international trading environment.

Fine Gael's long term commitment to the sector is set out in Food Wise 2025, which details clear actions to increase cropped areas and sustainability while reducing the cost of production. We have committed that the first adjustment to the Rural Development Programme will include a new tillage investment support measure, but clearly action is required in the shorter term.

Consequently, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine last month convened the first roundtable bringing together growers, compounders, representatives of the food and drinks industry, suppliers of inputs and State agencies to tackle challenges within the sector.

A new low cost loan fund making €150m available to applicant farmers in 2017.

The loans will be for amounts up to €150,000 for up to six years. The interest rate at 2.95% will represent a significant saving for farmers when

compared with other forms of finance currently available. The loans will be flexible with interest only facilities of up to three years.



Wexford IFA members meeting with IFA President Joe Healy

THIRD TRANCHE OF GLAS LAUNCHED

The third and final tranche of GLAS has now been launched with a small number of adjustments, aimed at making it easier to apply and providing a wider menu of options. Farmers are being urged to submit the highest standard environmental plans under the latest tranche to increase their chance of selection into the scheme.

The first two tranches of GLAS have already resulted in

- Conservation of 243,000 ha of permanent pasture
- Protection of 12,000 km of water courses
- Management of 75,000 ha of endangered bird habitat
- Planting of 13,000 ha of wild bird cover

ADVANCE PAYMENT OF BASIC PAYMENT SCHEME

An advance BPS payment was made again this October with over €714 million issued to more than 109,000 farmers including over €34 million to farmers in County Wexford to ease cashflow concerns. The level of the advance payment this year amounted to 70%.

Payments to farmers under the Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme are also continuing. Last year over 1500 farmers in Wexford submitted successful applications under the Scheme.

I can also confirm that payments under the Young Farmers Scheme and the coupled Protein Aid will commence in December.

For queries in relation to payments the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine can be contacted on 076 106 4420.

THEFTSTOP

While recent CSO statistics show a drop in the number of burglaries in the Wexford Garda Division, farmers know the importance of remaining vigilant. TheftStop is an initiative of the IFA and An Garda Síochána which aims to combat the theft of farm machinery. It provides farmers with a unique Security ID to mark machinery and equipment.

TheftStop will then maintain a database of all stolen equipment for members to view online. Registration is free, by logging on www.theftstop.ie.

REVITALISING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Budget 2017 included a significant number of initiatives which will have a positive impact in County Wexford, including a trebling of funding for the Towns and Village Renewal Scheme. Vibrant towns and villages have an important role to play in revitalising rural Ireland and with this funding we can enhance local amenities and improve the quality of life for local people and visitors alike. Funding has been recently awarded to the following projects in Wexford.

Bunclody	Accessibility, visual appearance and safety of main thoroughfare in Bunclody	€34,021.00
Enniscorthy	Accessibility, visual appearance and safety within the main industrial/commercial area Enniscorthy	€59,478.00
Bridgetown	Installation of a new footpath and pedestrian crossing	€47,000.00
Campile	Raised Platforms (Traffic Calming) Footpath	€25,000.00
New Ross	Undergrounding of Power Lines, Upgrade of Footpath pedestrian crossing.	€70,550.00
Rosslare harbour	Resurfacing of Road	€48,000.00
Ferns	Tourism	€65,450.00
Camolin	Landscaping, Additional seating, Picnic Area, Signage	€28,050.00
TOTAL		€377,549.00

INVESTMENT IN WEXFORD WALKING TRAILS

Over the coming months Coillte will be investing €61,000 to maintain and enhance a number of trails across the County.

Camolin Park - General trail maintenance
Carrickbyrne - General trail maintenance
Clogrennan - General Trail maintenance.
Replace bridge railings
Coolmelagh - General trail maintenance
Courtown - General Trail Maintenance and Paint Bridge
Forth Mt - General trail maintenance

Kilbrannish - General trail maintenance
Lacken Hill - General trail maintenance
Oaklands - General trail maintenance;
new signs; new surfacing
Rathwood - General trail maintenance
Tara Hill - General trail maintenance
The Raven - General trail maintenance
Tintern - General trail maintenance



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